

Remarks

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, favorable reconsideration of the outstanding office action is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-14, 24-27, and 48-52 remain in this application.

§ 103 Rejections

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 1-14, 24-27, and 48-52 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable for obviousness over U.S. Patent No. 5,871,559 (Bloom) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,253,035 (Fukuoka et al)

Claim 1 requires that the automated test station be adapted to guide a first end of the optical fiber which is stored on a storage spool to a first testing device, and also requires an automated conveyor system adapted to transport the optical fiber storage spool to the test station.

Bloom discloses a method for automating fabrication of fiber optic devices. Bloom does not disclose conveying a storage spool to a test station via an automated conveyor system.

Fukuoka discloses a system for automating the testing of a length of optical fiber. Like Bloom, and as the Examiner has previously indicated, Fukuoka does not disclose an automated conveyor system for conveying storage spools, nor does Fukuoka disclose testing a fiber while it is wound onto a storage spool. Furthermore, Fukuoka does not disclose conveying a spool via an automated conveyor system and then testing the fiber by an automated test station, as Applicants claim 1 requires.

Applicants again submit that one of skill in the art of making optical fiber seeking to improve methods of inspecting bare optical fiber would not be motivated to look to patents dealing with methods of automating fabrication of fiber optic devices (Bloom). Therefore, Fukuoka and Bloom do not appear to be combinable. Furthermore, even if assuming arguendo, one of skill in the art would be motivated to combine the references as suggested by the Patent Office, such a combination still would not result in Applicants claimed invention, as there is no description in any of the references cited of an automated conveyor system adapted to transport an optical fiber storage spool to a test station.

According to the Patent Office, "Fukuoka does not disclose a conveyor. However, Fukuoka's carrying unit performs the same function as the claimed conveyor (used for

transporting the fiber to the different processing units) and the claimed conveyor would have been known. It would have been obvious to substitute Fukuoka's carrying unit with the known conveyor to transport the spool easier." Applicants disagree with the Examiner's statement that Fukuoka's carrying unit performs the same function as the claimed conveyor. The function of Fukuoka's carrying unit is to carry only the fiber, while the storage spool remains stationary, and those fibers are thereby delivered to different units (e.g. processing unit, connecting unit, etc.) while the storage spool remains stationary. Conversely, the function of Applicants' conveyor is to carry a spool of fiber. Applicants do not understand how the combination of Fukuoka and Bloom can possibly result in Applicants' claimed invention, as neither of these references mention or suggest moving a storage spool on a conveyor. Applicants' conveyor is used for transporting the spool from different inspection sites located at different locations throughout a manufacturing plant. Conversely, if the combination of Fukuoka and Bloom were employed in a manufacturing plant, one would have to deploy a considerable length of fiber to get to different test stations, as the storage spool would remain stationary as taught in Bloom and Fukuoka. Thus, even if, assuming *aguedo*, the teachings of Fukuoka and Bloom could be combined, the Applicants submit that such combination would not result in Applicants' claimed invention.

While it is true that Figure 2 of Bloom discloses an apparatus in which moveable gripping devices 72 which grip the optical fiber are moveable along a track 74, there is no description in Bloom of an automated conveyor system adapted to transport an optical fiber storage spool to the test station. Furthermore, there is no description in Bloom of guiding a first end of the optical fiber to a first testing device and performing a test on the optical fiber while it is stored on a storage spool.

With regard to claim 7, again none of the references, either alone or in combination, disclose an automated conveyor system adapted to transport the spool from the first station to the second station.

With respect to claim 14, none of the references, alone or in combination, disclose first and second testing stations, wherein an automated conveyor system is adapted to transport the spool from the first test station to the second test station.

With respect to claim 24, none of the references, alone or in combination, disclose transporting an optical fiber storage spool which stores a length of optical fiber to a first

station by an automated transportation system, and then acquiring a sampling of the optical fiber from the spool by a testing apparatus and then testing the length of the optical fiber.

Conclusion

Based upon the above amendments, remarks, and papers of record, Applicants believe the pending claims of the above-captioned application are in allowable form and patentable over the prior art of record. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the pending claims 1-14, 24-27, and 48-52 and a prompt Notice of Allowance thereon.

Applicants believe that no extension of time is necessary to make this Response timely. Should Applicants be in error, Applicants respectfully request that the Office grant such time extension pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) as necessary to make this Reply timely, and hereby authorizes the Office to charge any necessary fee or surcharge with respect to said time extension to the deposit account of the undersigned firm of attorneys, Deposit Account 03-3325.

Please direct any questions or comments to Robert L. Carlson at 607-974-3502.

Respectfully submitted,


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